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MAGAZINE SECTION.

Old Stories Revised

By George Ade

THE STORY of MAUD MULLER

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The story of Maud Muller was a Corker in its day. It is now what President Eliot of Hovvad would call a Lime. If it were larger it would be called a Lemon.

Some forty summers ago every sentimental Sarah in the whole country kept in her room a Gift-Book containing the verses about Maud in the hayfield and the Judge riding by on his chestnut horse. It was a simple yarn, but sadly sweet withal.

When a Belle of the sixties retired to her yappy little Boudoir with the cardboard Mottoes, the kerosene lamp and the handworked Shams, she always had to read about Maud and her hard Finish before she could sink back into the Feathers.

First she would remove the stingy little Hat that usually had one rooster feather in it and was worn tilted over the right eye.

Then she would loosen up the Net, and the Chignon and the Waterfall, and carefully put away the Cameo Brooch weighing one-half pound.

Then she would take off the queer Gaiters that had Elastics on the side. Also the Bead Bracelets.

She would back out of the Velvet Basque and climb over the Hoops and divest herself of various Garments made famous by Godey's Lady's Magazine, after which she would be ready for her evening dose of Maud Muller.

If in war time Belle made up in the freak costume that was in vogue when Pa and Ma were young, should walk along Alimony Alley in the Waldorf-Astoria, they would sick the House Detective on her.

And by the same rule, when you try to hand a Maud Muller poem to Mabelle, of the class of '07, who has a Track Record of 1:56½, she simply chirps a couple of times and says, "Twice ten plus three for you and beat the barrier."

The Maud Muller kind of Poem has gone into the Discard with the Melodeon, the Lap-Supper and the Kissing Game.

What the Fly Public wants nowadays is Plot and Something Doing.

What is there in the whole Maud Muller business when you come to sift it right down and analyze it according to the methods of Modern Criticism?

It seems that Maud Muller was out in the field trying to be a full hand and save her father some money. We find accurate pictures of her in the old Gift Book. She was barefooted and her hair was let out to dry. Evidently she had been washing it. She had a round, shiny face and the fine, large belladonna eyes of the Anna Held variety.

She sang as she worked until she happened to glance at the far-off town, when she experienced a vague longing to discontinue manual labor and move into the city. This same symptom, prevailing to the present day, accounts for the large supply of Manicures.

At this point the Judge comes by on horseback. He is supposed to be a very rich man. At the time the poem was written judges were getting as high as twelve hundred dollars a year, and the query immediately suggests itself to the reader of the present day—did he have some side line of graft?

At any rate he was rich—therefore disreputable.

He pulled up in the shade of the old apple tree and asked the girl to bring him a drink of cold water. It might occur to some that a strong, husky man who had been riding all morning, would go and get a drink for himself, instead of asking some poor working girl to do it for him.

The story has it that she filled the cup from the spring and brought it to him, and as she took it she blushed, for she realized that she was not rigged out to receive swell company.

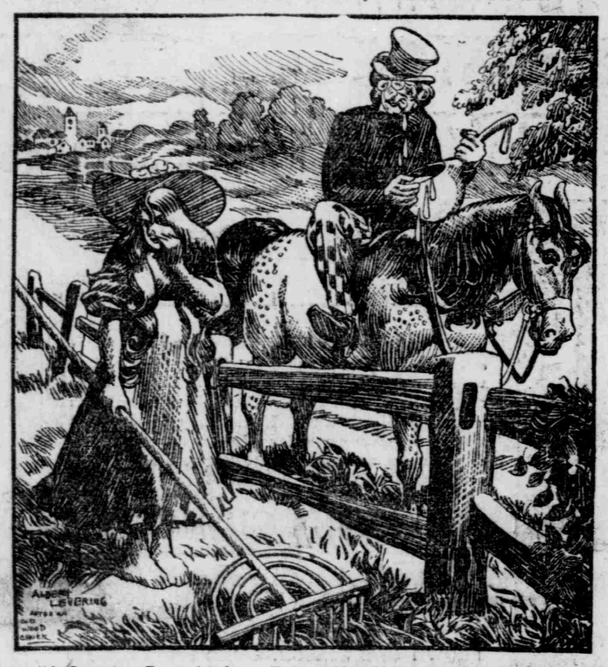
The Judge thanked her and remarked that "a sweeter draught from a fairer hand was never quaffed."

This was going some right off the reel. He went on to talk about the flowers and the birds and the bees and finally got around to the weather. A man dealing in this line of conversation could not stay in the game for any great length of time at the present day, but nevertheless it seems that the Judge made a ten-strike with Maud.

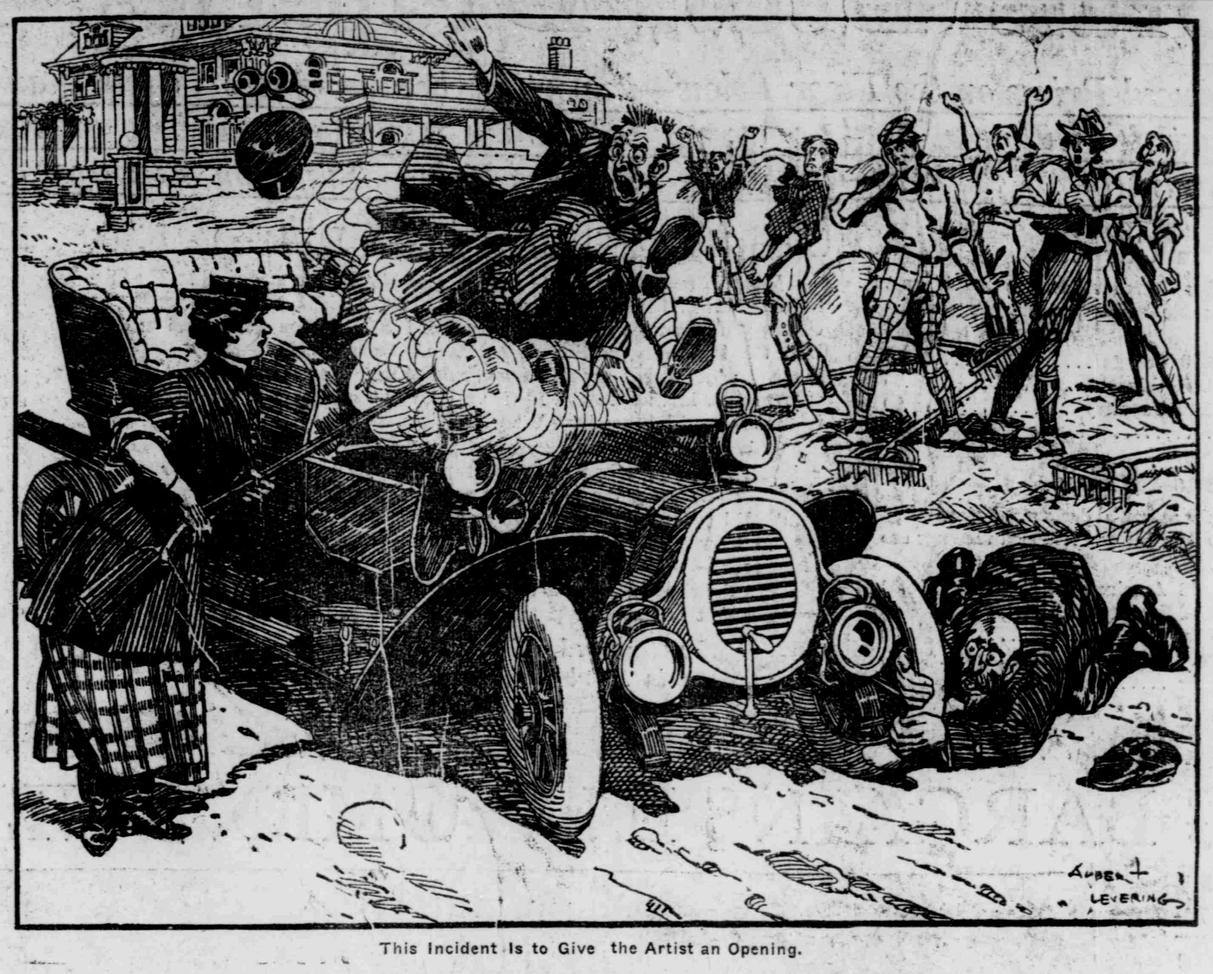
After he rode away she watched him and said to herself, as nearly as her remarks can be translated into the sweet Vernacular of the twentieth century:—"Oh, if I could only land some man like that! Our family would certainly put a crimp in his Bank Account. He could buy all father's clothes, and lend money to brother and pay mother's traveling expenses."

It was evident that Maud really loved the Judge.

As for the Judge, he looked back from a hill and saw her still soldiering and gazing at him and said:—"She looks all right to me. If I could get some girl like that, me for a quiet place in the country. But I don't think that my family would stand for her."



"A Sweeter Draught from Fairer Hand Was Never Quaffed."



This Incident Is to Give the Artist an Opening.

So the Judge rode on into town and back to the Court House, while Maud stood around, thinking of him, until she was caught in the rain.

He married a rich wife who traveled with the high-rollers, and often at night when he was waiting for her to come home he would gaze into the fire and wish that he could get out of it without having his picture in the papers.

Sometimes he wondered why he hadn't played a few return dates with the good looker that brought him the water.

As for Maud, she married a poor man, but what the couple lacked in Furniture they made up in Family.

Very often she would sit around during the long, lonesome evenings, with nothing to do but read the agricultural papers, and try to imagine what might have been if she had made a little stronger play for the Judge.

That is the end of the story. There is nothing more to it.

Suppose that some Whittier of today should write this kind of a story and send it to the editor of a brisk little magazines that guarantees you many a 'Would the wise man in charge tingle for your ten-cent piece of the dime-throbber, who knows just what the flat-headed public is looking for, accept any such childish and pointless narrative as this? Not on your 300,000 circulation!

He would return the Ms. to the Author and suggest a few changes in order to make the story more Snappy and give the Artist a chance at some cracking good Pictures. By the time he got through doctoring up the Romance it would run about as follows:

Maude, with an "e," as a type of the Progressive New Woman, is in the hayfield directing the operations of a large gang of workmen, when the Judge comes by in a 60 h. p. motor car.

The Judge has become immensely wealthy while acting as a tool of the Corporate Interests that are slowly but surely sucking the life blood of the Republic. The Judge is the embodiment of the pernicious System, whatever that is.

Inasmuch as he is exceeding the speed limit, Maude, when she sees him coming, goes into her colonial cottage that cost a half million and gets a shotgun, and as he comes by she shoots him in the knee. The purpose of introducing this incident is to give the artist an opening for a wash-drawing that will be full of Action.

The Judge falls out of the machine and Maude Muller has him carried into the house, whereupon he calls for a drink. The Maude Muller of 1906 knows better than to offer a Judge anything that comes out of a spring. She brings him a Scotch. When he arouses himself to the fact that she is a Raving Beauty and furthermore is highly cultivated the same as all the girls living in the country, he forgets his resentment and they spend many happy hours together discussing the problem of Labor and Capital while he is being nursed back to health.

At last the Judge returns to town, leaving Maude very lonely. The wires get crossed and he marries somebody else. She does the same, necessarily. Then both of them sit around reflecting on the old couplet:

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen
The saddest are these, it might have been."

Only they shift it around after a while to read as follows:

"Of all glad words now set to verse
The gladdest are these: It might have been worse."

A half century ago, when married people got in wrong and found that they were up against it, their only relief was to sit around and gaze into the fire and dream of what "might have been."

They were simply Stung and that settled it.

Nowadays when Folks find that they have miscued the matrimonial venture they turn their troubles over to a lawyer.

In the revised version Maude goes into court and proves that her husband invariably wears a red necktie, thereby giving her many hours of acute suffering, and that she can no longer remain under the same roof. So the Court sets her free and enters an order that she shall not be permitted to marry again for two weeks.

In the meantime, the Judge proves that his wife has been excessively cruel in that she does not always agree with him, and of course he gets his decree.

Then the Judge and Maude get together and take the tall Hurdle hand in hand.

In the antiquated romance when Mrs. E. D. N. Southworth was the Real Thing, the marriage of the two would be the Final Chapter.

It will be recalled that the Hero, after four-flushing and backing up and walking sideways through 300 pages of long conversations and weather reports, finally came to Taw.

He found her in the Conservatory or else at the rustic bench beneath the hawthorn tree with a distant view of the Manor House—the very spot on which they first met, the morning after Sir Guy was found murdered in the library.

Usually he would sneak from behind and lean over—then she, the startled little Cry—then he, "Agnes, I love you. I love you, I love you"—business of Clinching—quick curtain.

Such was the Happy Wind-up. But it will no longer do.

It was once supposed that after the two went strolling back under the elms, holding hands, there was nothing more to be told. But the modern problem novel usually begins with the wedding march.

The Judge, following the example of the average Central Character in the absorbing Story of Today, permits his lust for gold and power to lead him into the sinuous byways of financial crookedness. In other words, he becomes the Director of an Industrial Corporation, and about the same time both of the great political parties begin building a gallows for him.

Maude is tempted by the glitter of High Life. She learns to dally with Bridge Whist at ten dollars a throw. She gets in with the set that plays tag with the Ten Commandments and eats a light breakfast, consisting of grapefruit and a couple of Martinis about 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

In fact, Maude begins hitting the most elevated spots.

There is no reason why she shouldn't calm down and behave herself, but for some reason the plain $14 a week mortals who live in suburban flats like to have their Fiction served with paprika dressing, and so the poor Society Leader has to govern herself accordingly.

Maude gets to be an Awful Thing.

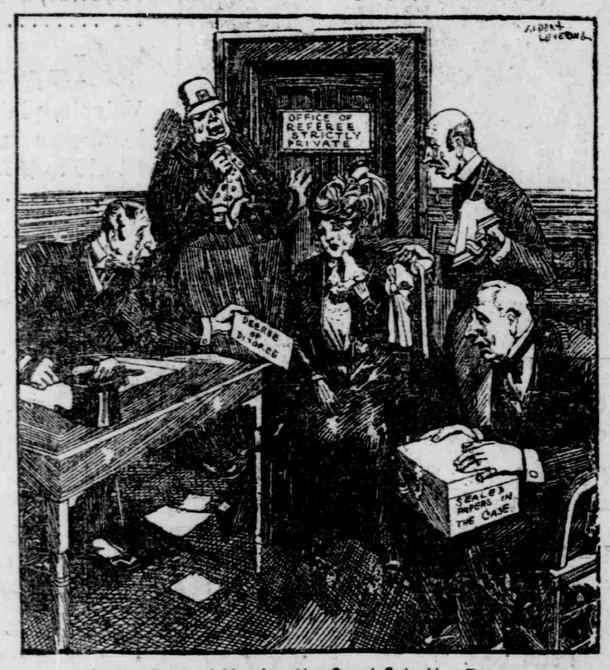
She is a night owl, and becomes well acquainted with nearly all of the club rowdies in the world except her own husband.

At last, in order to keep up the Pace, she begins to flirt with the Dope. Whenever anything happens to worry her, she simply gets out her Light Artillery and gives herself a Shot that blows the ribbons out of her hair. Then in a few minutes she is picking grapes and watching the Northern Lights.

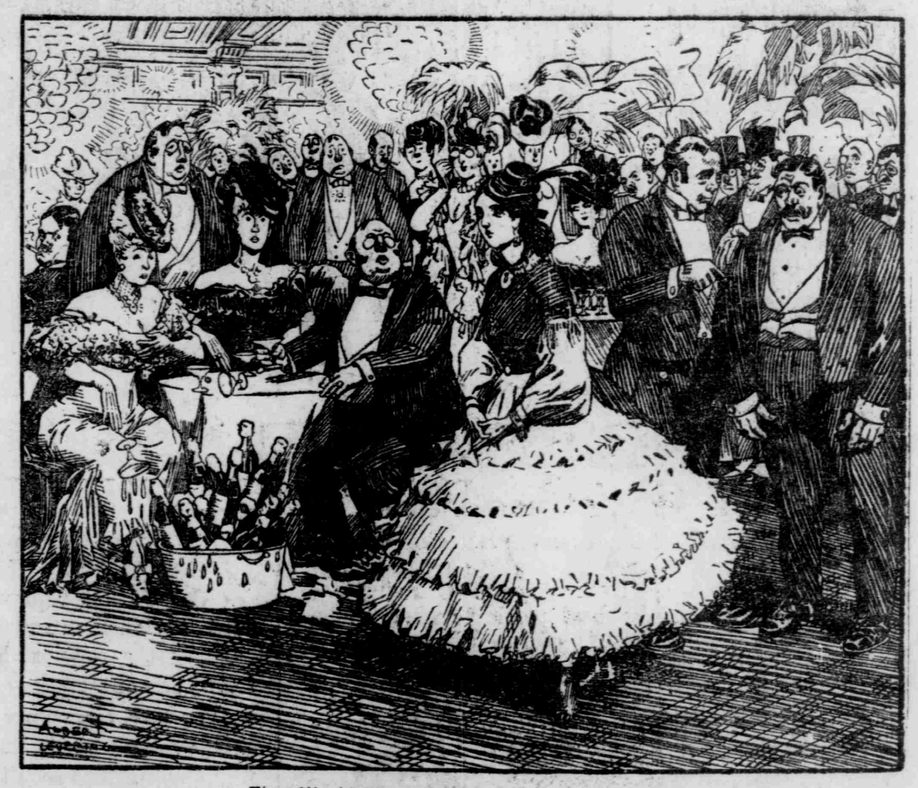
Things go on from bad to worse until Maude, fooling with the Hypo one day gets an overdose and the Judge, threatened with Exposure, jumps off of the Brooklyn Bridge.

The moral of the whole complicated story of Maude and the Judge is that all self-respecting Souls should remain Poor and keep away from Drawing Rooms where the Best Families are wont to congregate.

It is a good thing for Maude Muller that she wandered into the field of Romantic Fiction at a time when all she had to do was to rake hay.



In the Revised Version the Court Sets Her Free.



They Would Sick the House Detective onto Her.

WHEN NERVE COUNTED.

How a Penitentiary Warden Escaped Death by Keeping Cool.

(Chicago News.)

Early on a certain morning many years ago the warden of a penitentiary, an elderly, gray-bearded man, was at work at his desk. On a sudden he heard a panther-like tread in the room, and he divined a presence behind him that would have made a less fearless man faint away.

The presence was that of one Patrick Burns, a desperado, who was doing life service for murder. This man held an ugly looking dirk in his hand. The warden knew he was alone with the most dangerous prisoner in the penitentiary.

Pretending ignorance of Burns' proximity, the warden went on with his writing as if the criminal were not in existence. But his brain, remote from the papers that lay on the desk before him, was calculating with the swiftness and the accuracy peculiar to brains when the owners of them are in danger of their lives.

First of all, the warden wondered how Burns had managed to slip past the guards, and how he had come into possession of the long, ugly dirk. Then he reflected that the murderer had grown gray in prison, that he knew all the ins and outs of it, and that he had been studying nights and days, year after year, how he could accomplish this very feat.

In the little drawer just over the warden's gray head, in easy reach of his hand, his revolver was locked. To secure it would mean his salvation, to be seen making an attempt would cost him his life.

There were four or five guards in range of his voice, but had he spoken above a whisper to summon one of them the dirk would have severed him from existence.

He wrote on, as if undisturbed, his heart thumping, his hand steady.

"Mr. Warden, it's me that's here," said Burns, finally, "and it's mighty cool you are about it."

"I know you are there," replied the warden, coolly. "Why did you come?"

"I come because I'm tired of this. I ain't going to stand it no longer."

"You are not?"

"No. I'm not. I've been 'n here twenty years, and that's enough for any man. I'd rather be dead than stay longer. I've had enough. I'm going to kill you and get out."

"How long did you say you'd been here?"

"Twenty years." The man's eyes blinked. "It's a cool way you have of facing death, Mr. Warden. But I've had enough of this. I'm going to leave this hell hole. I don't know that I've got anything agin' you particularly, but I'm going to get out, do you hear?" He raised the dirk.

"What do you mean by getting out, Burns? Don't you know that you couldn't get a yard beyond the wall before the sentinels filled you full of bullets?" The warden, sparring for time, turned his keen gray eyes toward the little drawer that held his revolver.

"I'll take chances. It's enough I've had of it, and I'm going to run chances and get out of here, alive or dead."

"Well, I wouldn't get excited about this, Burns; let's talk it over coolly."

"I don't want to talk it over."

"Don't you think you're foolish, Burns? You have been serving a long time, your conduct has been good, and I was just thinking of asking the pardon board to consider your case."

"Well, Mr. Warden, I—"

Burns faced the barrel of a revolver, aimed by the surest of hands. The warden was on his feet. "If you move that knife an inch to the right or left you drop. Now turn and march to your cell."

"I ain't goin' back. I said I was goin' to get out of here alive or dead, and I'm going to keep my word."

"I'll have to shoot, then."

"You kin shoot." He watched the warden unflinchingly, the knife tightened in his grasp. He was waiting a propitious second to drive its blade home.

"You're a fool, Burns," said the warden, "to ruin your chances of a pardon."

"Do you promise me a pardon if—"

"I don't promise anything. I simply say that if you go back and behave yourself I'll see what can be done."

The prisoner reflected a second. "But I said I was goin' to do this and it's naggin' me to death they will be if I come back. I don't want them to know I lost my nerve."

"Go back, Burns; nobody but you and me will know about it."

"Very well, then."

He dropped his dirk on the floor and marched off the way he had come.

COSTLY JOKE.

Telegraph Operator Sends Message to Napoleon—Gets Bill for $187.50.

(Kansas City Star.)

"The story of Billy Holtham's costly joke illustrates that the laugh is not always on the side of the joker," said W. B. Bassett, an old-time telegraph operator.

"The incident occurred a short time after the civil war, when Holtham was assistant operator in Denver, Colo. In those days two operators did all the work in the Denver office. Holtham opened the office one morning, took the daily paper and began reading about the war between Germany and France. All at once the desire to perpetrate a practical joke seized upon him. Taking the pencil from his pocket he indited the following cablegram upon one of the office blanks:

"'To the Emperor Napoleon, Garden of Tuileries, Paris, France: Colorado will not accede to the cession of Germany to France. Please let Bohemia alone. Governor Gilpin or any other man.'

"Holtham called up Omaha and sent the cablegram to the man on duty there, just as he would have sent a bona fide cablegram.

"Omaha was the repeating office for all eastern business. Holtham then tore up his copy and threw the remains in the waste basket. Then he sat down and laughed. He supposed that the man on duty in Omaha would, of course, see the joke and after laughing himself over it would throw his copy into the waste basket. But the Omaha operator was a man who took everything seriously, and, hanging the cablegram on the New York hook, thought nothing more about it.

"This happened about the middle of the month and nothing more was heard of the fateful cablegram until about the middle of the following month, when Mr. Woodward, the Denver manager of the Western Union office, received the following message from the secretary of the cable company in New York:

"'Please come down with the dust.'

"Woodward scratched his head, but could not solve the enigma and replied:

"'Don't understand your message about dust. Please explain.'

In due time an answer was received, saying:

"'Your cablegram to Emperor Napoleon, Garden of the Tuileries, Paris, France, signed Governor Gilpin or any other man, $187.50 in gold, please remit.'

"At this juncture Billy Holtham stepped in and, pushing the message toward him, Woodward remarked:

"'What do you suppose that New York idiot means by that?'

"Holtham read it, and, turning pale, blurted out: 'Why, I sent that thing to Omaha as a joke, supposing the man receiving it there would see the point and throw his copy into the waste basket, as I did with mine.'

"'Joke!' replied Woodward, angrily. 'Do you understand that gold is now worth just two to one, and the cost of your little joke is $375?'

"Manager Woodward wrote a letter to the cable authorities explaining the matter to them and asking that the cablegram be canceled, but they were inexorable and demanded payment in full. At that time cablegrams were enormously high and payable in gold at that. The result was that poor Holtham had to make the amount good and the telegraph company permitted him to pay $50 a month until the whole sum was paid. Fortunately operators were then paid $125 a month salary and it was not as hard upon Holtham to liquidate the obligation as it would be upon a telegrapher at the present day, with salaries so greatly reduced.

"The late Edward Rosewater, who was manager of the Western Union office at Omaha when the incident took place, secured copies of the cablegram and of all the correspondence relating thereto and put the whole thing in a frame and it is no doubt somewhere among his collection of telegraphic curiosities."

TOOK A CAB.

(Bon Vivant.)

Ten-year-old Toto was going to a party for the first time.

"Here are two francs, Toto," said his father. "If it rains be sure to take a cab home." When Toto got home he was thoroughly drenched.

"Why didn't you take a cab?" exclaimed his father.

"I did, father," replied Toto, "and I sat on the box all the way home. It was superb."

BRINGS LANDLORD TO TIME.

(London Tit Bits.)

In a certain London suburb which need not be named there is a row of typical modern twentieth century, jerry-built, semi-detached villas. The houses, although quite new, are jerry-built structures of the most perfect stamp, with damp, cracked walls and plaster and windows and doors which rattle at the slightest breath of wind.

The tenant of one of them has repeatedly petitioned the landlord to make the necessary repairs, but each time he was put off with unfulfilled promise to attend to the matter as soon as possible.

At last, rendered desperate and reckless, the tenant painted the following notice on a big board and stuck it in his front garden:

"Caution! Pedestrians are earnestly requested to walk softly past this house. Drivers of vehicles of all kinds are implored to slow down when passing, or, preferably, to go round by the other road, as the slightest disturbance may bring the building down, the cobwebs which the spiders have woven in the corners of the rooms being not yet quite strong enough to hold the walls together."

The landlord has capitulated.

SOCIALISM.

(Bon Vivant.)

Guest—What did you pay for these cigars?

Host—Twenty-five sous for two.

Guest (astounded)—What?

Host—Yes, 20 sous for mine and 5 sous for yours.